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ABSTRACT

The manual is intended to help parents identify early characteristics and encourage learning in their gifted children. An introduction covers myths and facts about gifted children, citing the diversity among gifted students. Characteristics of gifted children recognized by parents are listed, including keen observation and curiosity, broad and changing interests, and heightened sociability and sensitivity. School identification procedures are reviewed. The parents' role in guiding, providing support, offering assistance, and fostering abilities at home is addressed. Four sample activities in which parents may learn more about their children are suggested. A final note addresses the adaptations necessary for home and family schedules with some gifted children. (CL)

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A MANUAL FOR PARENTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GIFTED EDUCATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12234
SEPTEMBER 1983

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A MANUAL FOR PARENTS

OF

GIFTED CHILDREN

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The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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September 1983

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FOREWORD

The "Gifted Child" - What does that mean? There is no definition on which everyone will agree.* What judgments might parents make? What do they look for? Do they know what can be done? What comments do they make? In response to a draft copy of this manual a parent commented about her child. She said that Lawrence, her son, has a personality different from some of the other children. After reading the manual, she said, "Now I understand why. I thought high marks were the only sign of giftedness." She also stated that Lawrence was never officially identified in school as gifted, and that she would have been able to understand him better if someone had told her.

The major purpose of this manual for parents is to help them identify some early characteristics of giftedness, to suggest ways they may encourage their children at home, and to offer suggestions for cooperating with the schools in providing education for gifted students.

*The New York State definition of gifted pupils is broad and general in nature.

It states:

> ". . . the term 'gifted pupils' shall mean those pupils who show evidence of high performance capability and exceptional potential in areas such as general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude, and outstanding ability in visual and performing arts. Such definition shall include those children who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential."

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INTRODUCTION

Carlos was a happy, lively baby. He began saying a few words at eight months, several months earlier than usual. Carlos showed interest in, and started identifying, the words on signs and billboards at two years. By the time he was three, he spoke in sentences and began reading his sister's preprimer and primer.

Paula was a quiet, sensitive child. Loud noises seemed to upset her, but she enjoyed singing melodic, gentle songs. Paula also learned to read earlier than most children. When she was three years old, Paula showed interest in her father's violin; so she started taking lessons at four years and was performing by the time she was six. When she entered kindergarten, Paula refused to read the preprimer with the other children. She knew all the words and resented the wasted time.

Both Carlos and Paula might be gifted children and their success in school may be greatly affected by the actions and reactions of their teachers. Parents need to know how to identify a gifted child, what to do for the child before school age, and how to assist the child during school years. This guide will try to provide information helpful to parents.

In our society, we believe that every child should be educated to his or her fullest potential. When parents and schools help the child reach that potential, both the individual and society benefit.

Who are the gifted children and how does a parent know if a child is gifted? Advanced vocabulary can be one indication. The gifted, when young, are curious, independent, observant, often critical, able to retain a large amount of information, and will often concentrate intensely on a project. Their skills and abilities usually develop earlier than normally expected. Often, the gifted child will undertake activities at 2/3 the age of the average child. For example, if the average child reads at age six, the gifted child may read at age four.

Giftedness is not a fixed category, however. Some children may not exhibit outstanding talent at a very early age, but may blossom at a later time. Children should not be labelled rigidly! We should recognize that some outstanding characteristics may require time for development and expression, and that, with appropriate instruction and a challenging environment, some characteristics may also be nurtured.

Intellectual ability is not the only way in which giftedness is demonstrated. Therefore, it is important that other talents and abilities be considered in identifying gifted children. The definition of gifted pupils on page iii is used by the New York State Legislature to allocate funds to schools for programs for the gifted. This definition includes students with "outstanding ability in visual and performing arts." For example, a child can be gifted in such areas as art, music, dance, drama, or writing. Giftedness can also involve areas such as athletics, vocational ability or even leadership ability.

MYTHS AND FACTS

There are some misconceptions about the gifted student. The Wisconsin State Superintendent's Advisory Committee for the Education of the Gifted and Talented prepared the following list of myths and facts about gifted children.

MYTH	FACT
1. Gifted children are weak and unhealthy.	1. Gifted children actually tend to be stronger, have fewer illnesses, and equal or exceed other children in height and weight. Many are outstanding athletes.
2. The gifted child is an oddball.	2. Teachers often fail to identify gifted children because they seem so normal. Studies show gifted people are highly stable. Only a small number of them ever spend time in mental institutions.
3. The gifted child is a bookworm, wears glasses, and does not participate in normal children's activities.	3. Most gifted children are good readers but they engage in many types of activities and have many interests. Some may actually need remedial help in reading.
4. Gifted chidren are enthusiastic about school and academic work.	4. Many gifted children are enthusiastic about school, others are bored and are found among dropouts.
5. Gifted children usually are from upper, middle class, professional families.	5. Gifted children occur in about the same numbers in all socioeconomic groups.
6. Most gifted children are failures in their adult life -- the "ripen early and rot early" theory.	6. Research indicates that outstanding success is achieved by most gifted individuals if they have been identified and their giftedness has been nurtured.
7. All gifted children are social misfits.	7. Gifted children enjoy social situations, talk readily, and know a great deal about many topics. They are often good mixers and assume more than their share of social leadership in school and out.
8. The play interests and activities of gifted children are different from those of normal children.	8. Although gifted children may prefer more complicated and challenging games, their play interests are usually the same as those of normal age mates.

9. Gifted children are likely to be egotistical and snobbish.	9. Most gifted children possess desirable personality characteristics.
10. Gifted children with the same IQ's have the same kind of abilities and interests.	10. Pupils with the same abilities differ widely, as each pupil's pattern of abilities and talents is unique. Therefore, differences make it difficult, if not impossible, to put the gifted in homogeneous groups.
11. Gifted children often fail to adjust socially in college as they have been accelerated in elementary and secondary schools.	11. Unless acceleration is excessive most gifted children make very good social adjustments in college.

HOW CAN A PARENT KNOW?

Some parents see characteristics in their preschool children that seem to set them apart. How can their initial judgments be informally confirmed? After these children begin their formal schooling, how are they then identified in school?

Is My Child Gifted?

Recognizing giftedness is a complicated and imprecise process. Parents, however, have an advantage, since they have the opportunity to observe their children from birth, for long periods of time, in many different situations. What should a parent look for? Some common characteristics of gifted students can provide a guide for parents.* Characteristics of gifted children frequently observed by parents include:

Early development. Gifted children may be more advanced than normal, performing tasks at an earlier age than usual. This advancement includes physical abilities, as well as language and vocabulary development. Gifted children often have verbal abilities and large vocabularies which are advanced for their years. Most children at age two make sentences such as: "There's a doggie." A two-year-old who is gifted might say, "There's a brown doggie in the backyard and he's sniffing our flower."

Keen observation and curiosity. A gifted child might pursue lines of questioning such as, "What makes Scotch tape sticky on one side and smooth on the other? How can they make a machine that puts on the sticky part without getting the machine all gummed up? Why doesn't the sticky side stay stuck to the other side when you unroll the tape?"

*Adapted from Sisk and Frinnier by E.G. Hall, and N.Skinner, Somewhere to Turn: Strategies for Parents of the Gifted and Talented, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 1980.

Retention of a variety of information. Gifted children amaze parents and teachers by recalling details of past experiences. For example, one six-year-old returned from a trip to the space museum and reproduced an accurate drawing of a space rocket he had seen. At two and a half when being instructed why streets were dangerous, another child recalled the parade he had watched six months previously and said those people shouldn't have been walking in the street.

Self-reliance and intense concentration. Gifted children may exhibit persistent, goal-directed efforts when faced with tasks which are of interest to them. They like to work individually and independently. A one-year-old gifted child might sit for fifteen minutes or more listening attentively to a story being read to an older brother or sister. When older, a gifted child can become engrossed in a book or project, totally oblivious to surrounding events.

Ability to understand complex concepts, perceive relationships, and think abstractly. Although an average four-year-old looks through a picture book of baby and mother animals with interest, a gifted four-year-old is more likely to observe concepts such as how much animal mothers and babies look alike except that the baby is smaller.

In a fifth-grade class, students were told to write a paper on what it's like to be poor. Most of the children wrote responses such as, "I would be hungry" or "I wouldn't have enough money." One gifted fifth-grader viewed the problem more abstractly and wrote "Being poor would only be a problem if others were not poor. If everyone else also had very little money, then we would all have less to spend and things would be cheaper."

A broad and changing spectrum of interest. Gifted children may show an intense interest in a subject, perhaps dinosaurs, one month, then turn to a totally different subject such as French literature or railroad engines the next. They are eager to examine the unusual, and are enthusiastic about new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Strong critical thinking skills and self-criticism. Gifted children evaluate themselves and others. They notice discrepancies between what people say and what they do, but they are usually most critical of themselves. For example, a gifted child who has just won a swimming race might complain, "I should have beaten my time by at least one second."

Heightened sociability and sensitivity. Gifted children look for their intellectual peers in individuals who may be chronologically older. This can result in their having a greater mixture of friends than other children. They are often leaders, rather than followers.

Giftedness in the arts. At three, a gifted child sang songs in tune and clapped to the beat of the music on his own. As a baby, he liked to hear recordings and have lullabies sung to him. He would hum many songs back in perfect tune at age one. At three, another gifted child drew a picture of her baby sister in a buggy from side perspective. At five, she drew a picture of tigers camouflaged in a jungle scene.

Parents should also be alert to vulnerabilities sometimes associated with giftedness.* To cope with these factors, the child needs a home and learning environment that recognizes the special stresses to which the gifted are susceptible.

*Adapted from Roberta Felker (ed.), A Parent's Guide to the Education of Preschool Gifted Children, Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, and National Association of State Boards of Education, Washington, D.C., 1982.

Emotional stress and social conflict. When gifted children are required to adapt to environments that run counter to their inner needs, they are particularly vulnerable to emotional stress and conflict. Many, for example, find it difficult to adjust to a highly structured schedule at school or at home. Others find the pressure of conformity a great burden. Long-term exposure to situations of this kind can contribute to serious problems as the child gets older.

Perfectionist tendencies. Gifted students tend to be highly critical of themselves. Many have an inner drive for perfection; others are pushed by parents or teachers. When a gifted child cannot fulfill unduly high expectations, the child may withdraw, rebel, or demonstrate erratic behavior.

Social isolation. Gifted students tend to pick up verbal and nonverbal cues very quickly. This can lead to a sense of social isolation from adults or children who may communicate resentment, rejection or jealousy.

Parents cannot, of course, protect children from these experiences but they can try to prepare them to cope. Parents should be alert to misbehaviors which may be indicative of the child's sense of inadequacy or social isolation. They should also help prepare children by teaching them to deal with failures experienced in their lives. For the gifted child this is especially important because of the heightened sensitivities often associated with giftedness.

It is never too late to take a good look at your child, to consider behavior that may reflect a special "gift."

Take the case of Stephen. . .

His attendance at school had never been good, and his grades had suffered as a consequence. When he was in eighth grade, Stephen started playing hooky from school, spending his time at the laundromat or the gas station, helping to fix the washing machines and cars. While in school, Stephen consistently amazed his science teacher, since he hardly ever handed in his assignments or took notes in class, yet got almost perfect scores on all the tests. His mother complained because he was always taking apart the electrical appliances in their apartment, using the parts to make what she referred to as "contraptions." When asked, she remembered that even as a young child, he would take apart his toys and put them back together. Complicated models took him little time to assemble, although he never read the instructions.

. . . Or Juanita.

In nursery school she would draw elaborate pictures of her neighborhood, filling in each store window with tiny renditions of the items on display. After picnics in the park, she would come home and draw the event, including accurate depictions of the clothes her family was wearing and the different colors and shapes of the leaves on the trees. A field trip to a modern art museum at age ten started her experimentation with abstract art.

Gifted children may exhibit outstanding abilities in many different areas, or maybe just one or two. Each child is unique, and gifted children are no exception.

Identification in School

New York State schools must by law conduct screening of all new entrants to assess whether they might be gifted. In addition, schools should be attempting to find other gifted students on a regular, preferably yearly, basis. Parents who feel that

their child may be gifted should contact their superintendent of schools, school psychologist or guidance counselor for specific details about the identification process used in their district.

The process New York State schools use to identify gifted students has three steps, SCREENING, REFERRAL and IN-DEPTH ASSESSMENT. SCREENING, the first step in the process, is a preliminary method of distinguishing from the general population those pupils who may be possibly gifted.

Based upon the results of the SCREENING, students who should receive further evaluation must be referred to the superintendent of schools. REFERRAL is the second step of the process. The school must notify the parent or guardian of a child referred as a potentially gifted student and must seek permission for further testing. Without parental permission, the child will not be tested, be evaluated or participate in a gifted program.

The third step in locating gifted students is IN-DEPTH ASSESSMENT. At this stage of the process school personnel take an in-depth look at each potentially gifted student to learn more about his or her strengths and needs in a wide range of areas. If the child is designated as gifted, the school district must notify the parent or guardian of the pupil's placement in a gifted program.

The three-step process, SCREENING, REFERRAL and IN-DEPTH ASSESSMENT, allows schools to learn more about each child and therefore plan more effectively for appropriate instruction to meet individual needs.

You may wonder how a school district actually identifies gifted students. Data should be obtained from a variety of sources in order to minimize bias involving race, gender and socioeconomic status. These data may include:

- group or individual intelligence tests
- achievement tests
- aptitude tests
- motor development tests
- rating scales
- anecdotal records
- personality tests
- creativity tests
- interest inventories
- pupil products and work samples
- records of counselors, clergy, and others who have had frequent personal contact with students
- observation of actual performance, talent, and special skills
- parental interviews
- parental nomination/ratings
- peer nomination/ratings
- teacher nomination/ratings
- autobiography
- case studies

The problems associated with the identification of giftedness are often compounded for minority students. Minority children and children whose first language is not English are sometimes overlooked although they may be gifted. Minority parents should be aware of the extra encouragement and support that their children might need at home and should also be aware that standardized tests administered in the schools may be culturally biased, resulting in lower scores for students from minority cultures.

YOUR ROLE IN THE LIFE OF YOUR GIFTED CHILD*

Remember That They Are Children

Like all children, gifted children need emotional stability and thrive best in a home where there is warmth, affection, and acceptance. Additionally, gifted children must be valued for themselves as whole persons, and not solely for their brainpower or special abilities. They need to know that they do not have to function constantly at the highest levels of their abilities, and that they have the right to be children like all others of their age. They must feel that they can cry, loaf, play silly games, run, shout, and do all of the carefree things children do, without fear of being scolded for being too babyish.

Being gifted does not necessarily mean that one can cope any more maturely with emotional situations. Even though we can more readily reason and discuss serious problems with gifted children, we should not expect them to respond on an abstract, intellectual level to family crises and difficulties. Because of their vivid imaginations and unusual range of knowledge (which are untempered by real life experiences), they sometimes suffer even more than other children their age.

*Adapted from Virginia Z. Ehrlich, Gifted Children, A Guide for Parents and Teachers, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1982.

Guide But Don't Push

Parents play a significant role in the career choices their children make. For the gifted, this influence is especially important since the early impact of the home can and does affect the choices they make.

The early history of eminent personalities shows that their parents often were very important forces in determining their career choices. Puccini's mother was determined that the musical history of her family be continued through her children. She selected young Giacomo and exerted all her efforts toward training his talent. Such determination on the part of parents can be dangerous. Fortunately, Puccini was talented in the area chosen for him and liked the choice. Others are not always so fortunate.

Parents can and should provide opportunities for their children to learn about the many careers that are available now or that are emerging. The parents' role should be one of guide, supporter, and educator; however, the ultimate choice must be left to the child.

It is an illusion cherished by some parents that they alone can direct and control what happens to their children. Successful parents are actively involved with their total environment and recognize the limits of their influence on their children's growth and development. Wisely, they know the importance of their own roles and use their strategic position in their children's lives to provide support and stimulation, in contrast to pressure and coercion, to help their children develop the strong and positive self-image that they will need to cope with the responsibilities and expectations that their extraordinary gifts will attract.

Your Attitudes Are Showing

It is important that you have a supportive and positive attitude toward your gifted child.

- o Acknowledge your child's giftedness and let the child know that you understand his or her capacities.

- o Foster the idea that your child's abilities are desirable traits to be developed rather than hidden. Make an effort to give special support to your child, whose ideas might be viewed as nontraditional; for example, girls who are interested in physics or in industrial arts and boys whose interests lie in performing arts or home economics.

- o Don't expect your gifted child to be the best at all times in everything. Think how hard it would be to live up to that standard constantly. Remember to praise your child's efforts, even if they are not successful.

- o Treat your child at the level of ability where he or she is able to function, always remembering to make accommodations for chronological age, experience, physiological development, social and psychological needs, and any other factors that might be appropriate to the individual child.

- o Understand that occasionally a gifted child will need protection from the teasing and name calling that others seem to find necessary defenses for their own lack of abilities or interest in achievement. As parents, be prepared to defend your child against unfair attacks and injustices meted out by others. Your child needs to know that you have faith in his or her abilities.

- o Extra support may be necessary for gifted minority children. Repeated reinforcement of self-concept and self-esteem may be necessary for those children who suffer from conflict between majority and minority cultures.

- o Because gifted children are often good logicians, inconsistency between parents on standards of behavior or social patterns will arouse rebellion in them even more quickly than in other children. "Do as I say, and not as I do!" will carry no weight with a child whose capacity to see relationships, infer conclusions, or reason is sometimes superior to that of many adults. Home discipline, therefore, should rely on the child's capacity for self-control and independence of behavior.

- o Gifted children sometimes seem to adhere to different timetables than other children, including taking longer to eat meals and not needing as much sleep. Some children sleep much better if they can stay up a little later and read for a while. Try to observe the patterns that your gifted child has and be flexible enough to accommodate their needs, within reason. One physician suggests periodically changing the location of the light near the bed of children who read in bed, so they will be encouraged not to lie in the same position every night.

Don't Be Afraid to Help

Some gifted children might complain of feeling isolated because other children leave them out of games; adults ignore their ideas and contributions to discussions; classmates leave them out of social activities. The gifted might be respected for their abilities, but they are not always viewed as fun people to be with, or, from an adult's point of view, grown-up enough to have anything worthwhile to say. Gifted children need to have opportunities to interact with their intellectual peers.

Helping your gifted child to find friends is not as difficult as you might think. You can ask your child's teacher to let you know if there are any classmates with whom your child seems to be friendly. Listen carefully when your child talks about school activities to notice if the names of any classmates are mentioned. You can even ask teachers to make a point of assigning your child to group projects with classmates who might be potential friends.

You also might wish to ask the principal or the coordinator of the gifted program to establish a support group or a discussion group for the parents of gifted children. Such groups help you to meet parents who have the same concerns as you and who also are looking for friends for their children. If the school staff does not have the time to organize such a group, volunteer to take the responsibility yourself.

Finally, encourage your gifted child to use his or her gifts to help other people. In accepting the responsibility of sharing with and assisting others, your child will have additional opportunities to develop friendships and will begin finding a place as an active member of society.

Parents Are Teachers, Too

Part of the joy of learning lies in sharing the discoveries made along the way with someone who cares and understands. This sharing becomes an essential part of the child's experience. What gifted children need is a good audience, someone who will listen, appreciate, and not ridicule the ideas they wish to explore.

Gifted children, as they themselves readily admit, love to talk. Involving gifted children in interesting conversation helps them to learn how to interact socially as well as how to communicate effectively. Family participation in group discussions, at the dinner table, or in leisurely get-togethers can create ideal situations for the gifted to partake in more advanced thinking and talking than is usually possible for them with their peers.

As parents, you should be confident that there is much you can do to teach your gifted child. You should not feel intimidated by your child's brightness. Regardless of the level of your child's ability, as parents, you have the advantage of age and experience. Some parents may be a little uneasy because they have not completed high school or college, or because they have a racial/ethnic background different from the majority. None of these factors should act as deterrents in your efforts to help your gifted child.

Foster your child's giftedness at home:

1. Use language that is natural to you, without editing your vocabulary to make it simpler. Bright children will learn long words as easily as short words, technical names as easily as euphemisms. You will be amazed at how rich a vocabulary a gifted child can master, as long as it is in connection with specific experiences.

2. Encourage use of toys that involve what educators call "thinking skills." These are toys that require color, size, or shape discrimination; keep tallies of "wins"; or involve counting and money transactions. As the children get older, there are more complex games involving planning, strategy, education, inference, and a broad range of information. From infancy on, a child's toys should be of mixed levels of difficulty, including easy ones and some that are a little harder than those you would ordinarily buy for such children.

3. Make books accessible. When your children are very young, read to them on a regular basis, and continue to read to them after you think they have learned how to read. Read anything that interests them as many times as they want. If you can, have books at home, including dictionaries, almanacs, and other reference books, as well as a wide variety of magazines. Include visits to the library along with your shopping trips or other excursions. Take out books for the children from all sections of the library, and do not let the books' presumed difficulty stop you. Ask the librarian about programs and resources for gifted children. The American Library Association encourages public libraries to make an effort to assist such special library users.

4. Take advantage of cultural facilities in your community, such as historical societies, art galleries, museums, theaters, festivals and activities that illustrate respect for cultural pluralism. Call these institutions and find out about their educational programs. Expose your children to many experiences, including any travel you might do. An excavation, building construction, the installation of a machine or a house telephone, the inspection of meters, the docking of a ship, the threshing of wheat, any and every experience is of value. Let your children share in your activities. Involve them in the kitchen, where foods must be measured, weighed, and combined. Take them to the food store and explain why you do or do not purchase certain foods. Talk to them about anything and everything. What gifted children need is the stimulus to thinking provided by reading matter, television and radio, and the exchange of ideas with others, particularly members of the community.

5. When it seems appropriate, enrich the lives of gifted children by providing opportunities to engage in sports or to develop special artistic interest, even if their primary abilities ar not in these areas. Gifted children should be exposed to activities that can enhance their use of leisure time. A time frequently comes in the lives of the intellectually gifted when the number of persons with whom they can share common interests and ideas becomes more and more limited. They need to relax and should be encouraged to regard their physical health and aesthetic development as being as important as their intellectual pursuits.

6. Establish a partnership with the school, since educating your child is a task of mutual concern. Discuss the needs of your child with appropriate personnel. Become involved with the parent teacher organization. Get to know what is going on in the school district and the state. You have a right to be involved in the decisions regarding what programs your child should take. If you are concerned, read some of the existing literature on giftedness available through public libraries or through advocacy groups.

   In helping to educate your child, try to supplement or expand on what the school is doing. Provide different materials on a more difficult level or on other subjects. If you are fortunate enough to have a neighbor or friend who specializes in your child's area of concern, try to arrange for them to meet and talk together. Gifted children often blossom with the encouragement of such a mentor. Such activities for the gifted minority child can increase self-esteem and self-image. Encourage your child to write to well-known personalities who might have special expertise in certain areas. One parent, whose child was a gifted cartoonist, arranged for the child to have lunch with a nationally published cartoonist who lived nearby. All it took was a friendly letter from the parent, explaining the talent that the child had and an offer to take the artist to lunch.

7. Spend time with your child in activities to develop creative thinking, problem solving, and language skills. Activities such as the following are suggested.

ACTIVITY 1

Choose a television program to watch with your child. As you talk over the program before, during and after viewing, ask questions that go beyond who, what, when, and where. Ask for example:

- Why do you think that person did what she did?
- What do you think might happen next?
- What other things could she have done to solve the problem?
- How do you think she felt about that event, decision, etc.?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Can your child go beyond the basic facts (who did what, when, where and how) and reason and think analytically?

Can your child analyze why someone might act in a certain way? predict what might happen next?

Can your child create several ways to solve a problem?

Can your child relate to emotions, feelings and concerns of others?

These questions and things to consider apply to reading a book with your child as well as watching television.

ACTIVITY 2

Start a drawing by putting a squiggle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. You add a detail to the picture, then the child adds a detail. As each of you adds a detail, you must also add a part of a story that related to the detail drawn.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Is your child comfortable with ambiguity . . . not having a single right way to respond?

Can your child build visually many ideas on a simple beginning? verbally?

Does your child create unusual and original details rather than predictable ones?

Is your child's language expressive or rich in description?

Does your child remember and build on early story details or relate things in logical order?

Does your child show a sense of humor in the activity . . . wit, puns, word play?

ACTIVITY 3	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Play a what-if game. You and your child pose what-ifs for one another such as: What if you had four legs? Each player in turn then suggests, draws or acts out a consequence. For example: "People might set plates on you." "You'd have to buy two pairs of socks" The game continues until one player runs out of ideas.	Can your child play with an idea? go beyond reality to imagination? Can your child connect causes and effects? Does your child build on ideas of others? Does your child enjoy sharing ideas by drawing or acting them out? Does your child risk saying silly or preposterous things? stretch the imagination?

ACTIVITY 4	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Play a game that involves strategy as well as luck with your child, or informally observe your child playing with age mates.	Does your child develop and prefer strategy over luck? Does your child adapt and alter a strategy to meet new conditions?

These activities are simply intended to be samples of ways to learn more about your child. You'll notice that they all boil down to some basic steps:

- Set aside time
- Plan a shared activity
- Talk with your child
- Listen and watch for clues that suggest advanced motor, language, thinking and reasoning, artistic abilities.

The more we know about our children, the better able we are to communicate, understand, and nurture them. Parents and schools alike can benefit, but most of all our children stand to gain from our efforts.

There Never Seems to be Enough Time

As difficult as it sometimes seems, parents of children with gifts in the practical or performing arts, foreign languages, or psychomotor areas must find the time to arrange family scheduling so that these children can take lessons, practice, participate in, and refine their talents. Musicians and dancers require many hours of practice. Painters need special light and supplies. The life styles of those engaged in these professions follow a different time schedule, a different pattern from the usual.

Parents of budding artists must be ready to make the many adaptations necessary if they are going to be helpful to their children. It might be informative for both parents and children to read about the lives of artists who have described the demands of their work and the priority they have had to give to certain aspects of their particular art. Margot Fonteyn, famous ballerina, tells how she had to practice daily, even after years and years of giving star performances. So, too, do most of the great instrumentalists, singers, and other artists.

Gifted children have a need to satisfy their eagerness to learn, but as importantly, they need freedom to relax and do nothing (or so it seems), time to fool around. Encourage them to play and relax, to do some things simply for the fun of it. If they daydream occasionally, they are satisfying a need. Ultimately, the use of time is a personal and family decision.

As a parent, you might find it difficult to devote the amount of time and energy to your child that you would like. Try to work out a schedule so that you have some special time each week free from expectations and responsibilities that you can share and enjoy with your child.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS FOR HOME TEACHING

Though some of the following materials are not designed specifically for the gifted, they do contain suggestions that are sufficiently complex to challenge such children.

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_____. The Magic of Puppetry: A Guide for Those Working with Young Children, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1980.

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Miller, B.S., and Price, M. (eds.), The Gifted Child, the Family, and the Community, New York, Walker and Co., 1981.

Mitchell, John, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, The Curious Naturalist: A Handbook of Crafts, Games, Activities, and Ideas for Teaching Children About the Magical World of Nature, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1980.

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Renzulli, Mary Jo, Ford, Barbara Gay, Smith, Linda, and Renzulli, Joseph S., New Directions in Creativity, New York, Harper & Row, 1976.

Ricca, Judith, and Treffinger, Donald, Adventures in Creative Thinking, Buffalo, D.O.K. Publishers, Inc., 1982.

Riggs, Maida L., Jump to Joy: Helping Children Grow Through Active Play, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1980.

ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH THE GIFTED

New York State

AGATE-Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education in New York State
P.O. Box 258
Shrub Oak, NY 10588

Concerned Citizens for the Gifted and Talented Children of New York City, Inc.
P.O. Box 11
Ryder Street Station
Brooklyn, NY 11234

Genesee Valley Gifted Education Team (GVGET)
P.O. Box 40425
Rochester, NY 14604

Gifted Education
New York State Education Department
Room 310 EB
Albany, NY 12234

PAGE-People Advocating Gifted Education
P.O. Box 324
Manlius, NY 13104

Westchester Association for the Gifted and Talented
18 Walworth Terrace
White Plains, NY 10606

National

The American Association for Gifted Children (AAGC)
15 Gramercy Park
New York, NY 10003

Gifted Children Advocacy Association
Gifted Children Newsletter
P.O. Box 115
Sewell, NJ 08080

National Association for Gifted Children
5100 N. Edgewood Drive
St. Paul, MN 55112

Council for Exceptional Children, (CEC)
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Mensa Gifted Children Program
4817 West Kirk
Skokie, IL 60077

National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented
316 West Second Street, Suite PH-C
Los Angeles, CA 90012